

**ALLAGASH WILDERNESS WATERWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES**

March 18, 2022 10:00 am – 12:00 pm  
Meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Council Members Present: Peter Bourque, Chair, Farmingdale; Emma Lord filling in for James MacCartney, National Parks Service Rep.; Josie Allen, Haymock Lake; Bob O’Leary, Hampden; Jim O’Malley, Clayton Lake; David Milligan, Ashland; Brent Hardy, Dedham

Bureau of Parks and Lands Staff: Andy Cutko, Kevin Brown, Trevor O’Leary, Mark Deroche, Ron Hunt, Abigail Andreasen

Members of the Public Present: Bob McIntosh and Paul Johnson (AWW Foundation); John Daigle (Professor at the University of Maine in the Parks Recreation and Tourism Program); Maine Public Radio

**Welcome, Agenda Review - Peter Bourque**

Chair, Peter Bourque opened the meeting appx. 10:02am. He asked if any specific items couldn’t be covered under old or new business. Hearing none, Peter asked BPL staff to introduce themselves. Andy began the introductions and noted that there was discussion this meeting would be in person but due to different factors this meeting was held via TEAMS. The hope is that the next meeting in June will be in person in the Bangor Office. It was also noted that Abigail Andreasen has been promoted to the Campground Reservations Manager meaning that moving forward she may or may not be joining in on future calls. Introductions continued with the rest of the BPL staff followed by Council Members and members of the public.

**Approval of January 2022 minutes – Peter Bourque**

Peter asked if there were any errors or omissions in the January 2022 meeting minutes. Corrections to be made:

- Peter had found on page 3 the word Telos Sam needed to be edited to Telos Dam.
- Peter found that on page 3 the word extortionary needed to be changed to extraordinary.
- Brent found on the last page under the section Elect 2022 Chair and Select Meeting Dates that Bob McIntosh be changed to Bob O’Leary as he was the individual to second the nomination.

Bob O’Leary asked for clarification if the new Ferry Landing campsite, mentioned on page 3, was above, north, or south of the ledges. Mark Deroche responded that it was South of the ledges. More specifically, the site is located roughly halfway down the lake when one bears right after traveling through Umsaskis at the point where the lake opens up. Bob also inquired what the recent history was at that location which Mark responded that it was an old Ferry Landing. There are still some remnants there including an old boat. Kevin Brown went further by saying that back in the 1920s the American Realty Company had a depot there. At that point in time, the Realty Road traveled there instead of where it is now. The campsite itself has a very small field and a high bank.

Peter motioned to accept the minutes as amended, Bob O’Leary moved to accept it and Brent Hardy seconded.

**Director’s Report – Andy Cutko**

Andy reported that during the January AWW meeting, Kevin Brown conveyed that camping numbers for Church Hill Dam set an all-time record and that this trend seemed to reflect the overall trends for Maine State Parks in 2021. Moving forward to this year, February’s opening day for Maine State Park reservations was also astounding. More than 9,000 transactions were processed for the campgrounds, 4,000 within the first hour, and 125 transactions in one minute.

These trends remind everyone of how important these places are to people in today’s world, as they are spaces for people to get out and recoup from everyday life.

**Allagash User Survey – John Daigle (University of Maine)**

Chair, Peter Bourgue introduced John Daigle who will speak on his Waterway Survey conducted in 2019. Completed a few years ago, the results from the survey is still relevant to this day and can contribute to the future management of the Waterway. John acknowledged his graduate student Ashley Cooper who did a fantastic job organizing and administering the survey, the Allagash Wilderness Waterway Foundation for their help and support, and the University of Maine's Agricultural Forest Experiment Station for contributing funds to complete the work.

John began by first presenting Table 11 of the Technical Report which lists the attributes that are important to visitor experiences and how satisfied they are with these. The attributes range from the natural environment and what they saw and heard to attributes of hunting, fishing, gathering, and what the user experienced with doing these activities in a remote area. The attributes listed are associated with the letters A – M. The listed attributes are mostly associated with the qualities of solitude which fits with the Waterways management objectives. The questions asked on the survey focused on how visitors felt the importance of these attributes were and what their satisfaction levels are.

Using an Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) John was able to take the data accumulated and place it into four different quadrants to identify which attributes rated higher or lower on the importance and satisfaction of visitors. Seeing where the attributes fall in the analysis can give a good idea of what could be improved on or which are in good shape. The four Quadrants consisted of:

- A. High importance averages with low satisfaction averages – Concentrate on the attributes here
- B. High importance averages with high satisfaction averages – Keep up the good work
- C. Low importance averages with low satisfaction averages - Low priority attributes
- D. Low importance averages with high satisfaction averages - Possible attributes with too much focus

The Waterway users who completed the survey rated all but two attributes in quadrant B, meaning that these attributes were all rated as highly important and highly satisfied. John stated that by looking at this information, the assessment of the Waterway is very good. The two that did not rate as well were the attributes M for hunting, fishing, and gathering and L for the number of users seen. Attribute M rated in quadrant C as a low priority while attribute L rated in quadrant D as possible having too much focus. John expressed the importance of remembering that these answers reflect all visitors, including the ones who don't partake in specific activities. By segmenting visitor types, one can see how visitors rated the attributes that they partake in which may result in a higher importance average. Looking at the overall visitor trip experience ratings 86% rated their experience as very good, 13% rated their experience as good and 1% rated their experience as fair. Visitors who participated in this survey needed to be 18 years old or older.

Looking further into this survey data and feedback can help the Allagash by prioritizing the improvements that are important to visitors. The survey data also gathered information from visitors about what campsites they stayed at, the pattern of their trips, and the time of year they visited. Visitors completing the survey were also able to leave feedback and comments. In their comments, visitors expressed how much they valued the solitude, being disconnected from technology, and how the experience has remained the same over time.

Josie asked through this survey or knowledge of staff members if there has been a point yet where campsites have become too crowded, and people are unable to be accommodated. Kevin responded that there haven't been any issues due to overcrowding however, some favorite campsites do get taken quickly or some sites become full focusing people to move down the Waterway in order to find an empty location. Depending on wind and water conditions, sometimes it can be difficult when campsites are full to get to another campsite further away. Bob O'Leary mentioned the fact that the busiest times for camping usually begin on the weekends and that advising people to begin their trips in the middle of the week is best.

John thanked the Allagash Staff for their help and involvement of the study entering in all the data that was collected. He and Mark are planning to work together more with this data later on in the summer. Peter mentioned that he is very happy with the results as they fulfill both the strategic and management plans.

## **T12 R13 Common/Undivided Bill – Andy Cutko**

Andy provided an update on a bill working its way through the legislature which is intended to resolve BPL's common undivided ownership in a couple of properties in Northern Maine. Common and undivided ownership is essentially when two different owners jointly own a piece of property, however, the demarcations between one owner's ground and the others are not clear, and resolving these issues must be done through legislative approval.

One part of the bill regards BPL acquired parcel of land on East Turner Mountain which is adjacent to Baxter State Park and is now entirely surrounded by the monument. Part of this resolution lets BPL move forward to negotiate with Baxter State Park and transfer that parcel over to them. This moved forward but still needs to be voted on by the full legislature.

The second part of the bill regards another common undivided land, between BPL and LandVest, in T12 R13 which straddles both sides of the Allagash along the northern part of Long Lake and north of Umsaskis. BPL owns roughly 25% of this land while LandVest owns 75%. The Bureau's intention with this bill was to sell their percentage to the majority owner, LandVest, and then use the proceeds from that sale to invest in conservation land elsewhere within Aroostook County. The Bureau's oversight committee at the Legislature wanted the Bureau to first take a closer look at the Township and see if an agreement could be made with LandVest by both owners getting together and drawing lines on a map to identify which owners own which acres. Due to this, the bill was tabled to allow time for the owners to get together to take a closer look at this section of land. Any negotiation done would be in consultation and agreement with LandVest. Council member Jim O'Malley represents LandVest and is aware of these discussions. Work with Maine Natural Areas Program and IFW has been done to complete an initial assessment of ecological values adjacent to the land which has been shared with LandVest. The finding showed a large wetland complex that's adjacent to the Waterway known as the Raw Stream that is of interest. The Allagash Foundation is interested in this bill and has an interest in supporting the work done to assess the landscape values and partake in discussions with LandVest regarding those. More discussions between the Bureau and LandVest are to come.

Jim O'Malley made the important clarification that LandVest does not actually own the property but is strictly the land manager. The actual owner of the property is Clayton Lake, Woodlands Holdings LLC.

## **Mid-Winter Update – Mark Deroche / Kevin Brown**

Mark began his report by touching on the Waterways public use report for 2021. Comparing last year's usage to this year showed a 22% increase in parties coming to the Waterway to camp, 54 % increase in the number of people, 64% increase in camping nights, -0.5% decrease in sporting camp days and lastly a 25% increase in overall total visitor day use. Looking at the same themes over a five-year period showed that the number of parties was slightly down from its peak in 2016, the number of people and camping nights were up, sporting day camps remained roughly the same over, the number of day-use although slightly lower than last year is still much higher than in 2016, 2017 or 2018, and lastly, the total visitor days came in at 39,143 which is the highest it has been.

Camping use comparisons over the last two years broken down by month showed camping use up by 25% in May, 40% in June, 75% in July, 18% in August, and September was slightly down by -3%. Mark thinks that the COVID restrictions being lifted could be the result of this type of use pattern.

6 oversized groups have the ability to receive a special permit which would allow them to have more than the maximum number of trip participants which typically is capped at 12. Out of those groups, only one applied for the oversized permit which resulted in two permits given. If these oversized groups go a total of 3 years without the use of these permits, they lose their ability to maintain the permit putting them back to the maximum of 12 people per trip. However, the last two years did not count towards the permitted usage as COVID restrictions were in place.

The 2021 revenue from fees collected was \$106,968.15, which comes from fees from camping, porter services, sporting camp leases, and tolls on Churchill Dam (\$0.22 a ton for logging trucks). The current year to date for FY22 AWW revenue fees is \$170,850.66. The capital improvement fund for 2021 came in at \$58,234.45 which is quite a bit lower than in past years. This fund is a Maine law that requires a portion of the revenue received from camping fees to be set aside in a non-lapsing account to be used for capital improvements in the Waterway such as the new ranger residence. The current year to date for this fund is \$131,633.50. As of June 30, 2021, the AWW Endowment Fund is \$21,965 which is an increase of \$10,717 since the year 2020. This is an interest-bearing trust account at the Department of Treasury. As of the same date, the AWW Donations Account came to a total of \$4,578.00.

The 2022 fiscal year budget came to a total of \$233,994 which \$133,994 went towards the General Fund Allotment and \$100,000 to the AWW Capital Account.

#### Mid-Winter Updates

- Ruth LaRoche left her post after ten years of service. Thank you, Ruth!
- Conducting six interviews for two Churchill Dam assistance ranger positions.
- Purchasing 8MBF of cedar logs from the Public Lands Telos Unit for picnic table stock.
- 74 Visiting Artist Program applications. Judging will be done by March 31.
- Weekly staff meetings: Completed the review of all the Waterway rules. Will finish reviewing all publications and establish a season training schedule.
- Trevor and Mark visited Camp Kieve/Wavus. Will be visiting Chewonki and Maine High Adventure this spring. The goal for doing this is to become a resource for them and be able to provide them with any issues and expectations we may have in advance instead of having issues become presented at the time of their visits. The hope is for this to become an annual connection.
- Trevor is attending a Chainsaw Trainer Certification Course.
- Contractor's bids closed for site work on the Farm Brook ranger residence. The bid package for the structure will be released shortly. The goal is to complete the new facility by mid-June.
- New 90HP Yamaha on the Churchill Whaler (was a 60HP). New GPS technology to be installed on boats this summer. Will be training staff on this technology as its received.
- 2022 Eagle Project planned. Sawyer Rose (14yo) and his father Dan contacted Kevin to set up an Eagle Scout Project. They agreed on creating the new single-cell camping in August on Umsaskis. Another single cell site will be completed on Long Lake by AWW Staff. Permits are already in place.
- All winter deliveries will be completed the following week.

#### AWW Council Work Group Topics

- Strategic Plan & Management Plan Updates. Discussions have begun with BPL's Recreational Planner and BPL's Chief Planner Liz Petruska for these updates but more is to come. Mark is hoping to create a work group within the council make updates as well.
  - Jim O'Malley would like to be involved
- Boarding House Historic Preservation Project – Workgroup to help understand what is best moving forward by adhering to the historic expectations. Not just rebuilding but also want to clarify what we going to do exactly with this structure. The historic time frame has already been established from 1926 to around 1940.

- Bob O’Leary and Brent Hardy would like to be involved
- AWW Endowment Fund Development – Thinking it would be beneficial to work together on this with the AWW Foundation as they also have an endowment fund. Looking to make a workgroup to understand what the endowment fund does for the Foundation, what it does for the AWW, and how we can complement one another in terms of contribution.
  - Peter Bourque would like to be involved.
  - Peter raised the question if there could be a dedicated account for Boarding House reconstruction work.
    - Ron responded that the Allagash has a “Park Donation Account” which is an account where all donations to that specific park go.

Chair Peter Bourque thought this would be a great way to get items completed. Andy Cutko welcomed any Council Members terming out to still be involved in these workgroups. Ideally, we would like 2/3 council members on each workgroup and it was encouraged to email either Andy or Mark in regards to becoming involved.

#### **AWW Foundation Updates – Bob McIntosh and Paul Johnson**

- The Foundation is in summer planning and fundraising modes.
- Their youth on the Allagash program is ongoing as well as the Classroom to River Project including three middle schools in the Valley.
- Planning to run the Day Camp again this year
- Increasing their Allagash Wilderness trips from 3 to 4. Two of them will be three-day trips while the other two will be four-day trips.
- The Natural Resource Inventory and Monitoring Project is continuing. This summer will be focusing from Churchill to further down the river.
- Pleased to get funding for looking at the cold-water fish habitat temperature situation and monitoring program.
- Doing some strategic planning since they have passed their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Once completed this will be shared with the Council. We can (not by statute) dedicate those monies to the Boarding House

#### **Old Business/ New Business. – Peter Bourque**

No old/ new business.

#### **Public Comment**

No public comments.

#### **Closing Comments and Adjournment**

Andy asked by a show of hands who would be interested in an in-person meeting in June and many showed interest. The meeting was adjourned at appx. 11:53 am.